



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

MR. ROOSEVELT'S MORAL RIGHT TO BECOME A CANDIDATE FOR REELECTION.

BY Q.

ON the evening of the day whose sun had set upon the most notable personal political triumph of the century, Theodore Roosevelt, President-elect, voluntarily addressed to the American people the following explicit words:

"On the 4th of March next I shall have served three and one-half years, and this three and one-half years constitutes my first term. The wise custom which limits the President to two terms regards the substance and not the form. Under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination."

Had the writer of these words contented himself with the assertion that under no circumstances would he become a candidate, the utterance would have partaken of that familiar perfunctoriness which has characterized like statements upon so many occasions that the true meaning has come to be regarded as the opposite of that apparently conveyed. This does not necessarily imply insincerity upon the part of those who have made the declaration. To "refuse to become a candidate" means only that one will not *seek* a nomination. That a nomination freely or urgently tendered would be rejected is in no sense implied. Indeed, as I have noted, the precise contrary is often the plain intimation and desired inference. But Mr. Roosevelt, with characteristic thoroughness and emphasis, while unconsciously dropping into conventional phrase, not only went much further, but made a totally distinct declaration when he wrote, "*Under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination.*" Omit the words "be a candidate for," and the pledge gains in strength. Nevertheless, the precision and emphasis of the

declaration, as it stands, seem to leave no possible room for honest questioning.

Why, then, is it a fact—as, I think, will be admitted—that a very large number, probably a majority, of citizens anticipate that again they will have the privilege of voting for or against electors pledged to Mr. Roosevelt two years hence? That Democratic politicians should assert *their* belief to this effect is of no consequence, for the reason that it is an essential feature of the game to discredit and impugn the sincerity of their adversaries. But the same belief rests, to my certain knowledge, in the minds of more than one candidate for the *Republican* nomination. Here, again, due account must be taken of the effect of disagreeable apprehension. But go further. Ask the man in the street, the acquaintance on the next block, and—finally and of chief significance—the most ardent admirer and respecter of the President within your zone of inquiry, and the invariable reply is: “He will *have* to run again; he can’t help himself.”

Personally, I yield to no man in esteem for Theodore Roosevelt or in sturdy faith in his sincerity; yet I, too, expect to vote for him in 1908, and, more to the point, I anticipate casting my ballot with a conscience as clear as my satisfaction will be keen, with no thought or consideration of a stain upon the personal record or honor of my candidate because of that which his detractors will undoubtedly pronounce a breach of faith. Nothing, I am convinced, could induce me to support a dishonest or untruthful man for the Presidency of the United States. Nevertheless, I repeat, I fully anticipate that Mr. Roosevelt *will* accept the Republican nomination, and I shall welcome the opportunity of adding my mite to the great majority he will undoubtedly obtain. My motives, I may add parenthetically, will be wholly unselfish, as I do not and would not occupy a position in the public service. Reasons in abundance I might, and may at some future day, set down; they are not only sufficiently obvious, however, but also apart from present consideration. My sole endeavor now is to effect a reconciliation of those noted inconsistencies which seem to be real, but which I believe to be only apparent and readily dissipated when subjected to the searching test of enlightened exegesis.

In matters of great moment, especially such as concern the State or the welfare of millions of human beings, literal inter-

pretation of an individual utterance of far-reaching import does not necessarily render its actual meaning. Some philosophers, indeed, have gone so far as to maintain that those charged with grave responsibilities are freed from the trammels of convention in respect to exactitude of statement, because of the paramount importance of ultimate achievement as contrasted with the character of antecedent acts intimately or remotely related to it. Witness Machiavelli on the prerogatives of princes.*

* "It is unquestionably very praiseworthy in princes to be faithful to their engagements, but among those of the present day who have been distinguished for great exploits, few, indeed, have been remarkable for this virtue, or have scrupled to deceive others who may have relied on their good faith. . . . In other words, a prudent prince cannot and ought not to keep his word except when he can do so without injury to himself, or when the circumstances under which he contracted the engagement still exist.

"I should be cautious in inculcating such a precept if all men were good, but as the generality of mankind are wicked and ever ready to break their words, a prince should not pique himself in keeping his more scrupulously, especially as it is always easy to justify a breach of faith on his part. I could give numerous proofs of this, and show numberless engagements and treaties which have been violated by the treachery of princes, and that those who enacted the part of the fox have always succeeded best in their affairs. It is necessary, however, to disguise the appearance of craft and thoroughly to understand the art of feigning and dissembling, for men are generally so simple and so weak that he who wishes to deceive easily finds dupes. . . .

"It is not necessary, however, for a prince to possess all the good qualities I have enumerated, but it is indispensable that he should appear to have them. I will even venture to affirm that it is sometimes dangerous to use, though it is always useful to seem to possess them. A prince should earnestly endeavor to gain the reputation of kindness, clemency, piety, justice and fidelity to his engagements. He ought to possess all these good qualities, but still retain such power over himself as to display their opposites whenever it may be expedient. I maintain that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot with impunity exercise all the virtues, because his own self-preservation will often compel him to violate the laws of charity, religion and humanity. He should habituate himself to bend easily to the various circumstances which may from time to time surround him. In a word, it will be as useful to him to persevere in the path of rectitude while he feels no inconvenience in doing so as to know how to deviate from it when circumstances dictate such a course.

"He should make it a rule, above all things, never to utter anything which does not breathe of kindness, justice, good faith and piety. This last quality is most important for him to appear to possess, as men in general judge more from appearances than from reality. All men have eyes, but few have the gift of penetration. Every one sees your exterior, but few can discern what you have in your heart, and those few dare not oppose the voice of the multitude, who have the majesty of their prince on their side.

"Now, in forming a judgment of the minds of men, and more especially of princes, as we cannot recur to any tribunal, we must attend only to results. Let it then be the prince's chief care to maintain his authority. The means he employs, be what they may, will for this

Just as to this day monarchical countries accord to their rulers special privileges, such as open maintenance of mistresses, exemption from the payment of lost wagers and the like, so has unwritten law—potent as the intangible British constitution—conferred upon them a wider latitude in all things bearing upon the effect of their official activities. Justification of lapses unwarranted in private life is found in the surpassing hardship of solving great problems and the constant mental and moral strain pertaining thereto. True, this freedom from ordinary restraint does not obtain to so marked a degree in this country, where the Puritanic code still exercises a considerable, though waning, influence, and where rulers are regarded, or at least spoken of, as servants of the commonwealth. It is, nevertheless, an undeniable historical fact that many divergences from the strict letter of propriety on the part of our greatest men—notably Washington, Jackson, Lincoln and Grant—were readily overlooked by the people, whose instinct accorded to them exceptional consideration. Even in the recent unhappy episode involving a question of veracity between President and former Senator, the same spirit was manifest; and, despite an apparent burden of evidence tending to his discomfiture, the magistrate holding high authority and withstanding manfully the strain of great responsibility emerged unscathed from the controversy.

Now, admitting, as all must admit, that it is only the actual meaning of a grave declaration that merits observance, how must “Under no circumstances will I . . . accept another nomination” be interpreted? Construed with strict precision, no differentiation in time being suggested, this pledge would bar the President from *ever* accepting another nomination. Yet nobody pretends that that is what he meant, or that, in 1812 or 1816 for example, an accusation of breach of faith would stand for a moment, or even indeed be thought of. Literally, the self-imposed inhibition is explicit and for all time; but, practically, every one recognizes purpose always appear honorable and meet applause, for the vulgar are ever caught by appearances and judge only by the event. And as the world is chiefly composed of such as are called vulgar, the voice of the few is seldom heard or regarded.

“There is a prince now alive (whose name it may not be proper to mention) who ever preaches the doctrines of peace and good faith, but if he had observed either the one or the other he would long ago have lost both his reputation and his dominions.”—From “The Prince,” eighteenth chapter, entitled “Whether Princes Ought to be Faithful to Their Engagements,” by Niccolo Machiavelli.

that the President could not have restricted the date of his refusal to the year 1908 without implying a willingness, even a desire, to become a candidate at some future date, thus giving ground for an inference so uncalled for as to be regarded almost surely as presumptuous.

My first and fundamental contention—namely, that the spirit is at variance with the letter of the declaration—is, I submit, established. Study of the context is essential to a clear understanding of any statement, however unambiguous in appearance. In this instance, the stated reason for refusal is the cardinal feature. It is found in the desirability of maintaining “the wise custom which limits the President to two terms.” Here, again, form and substance are out of unison. Reading casually, one would leap to the conclusion that Mr. Roosevelt’s objection was based upon the unwisdom of a citizen serving as President for more than eight years during his lifetime. Clearly this is not the meaning he intended to convey. His self-abnegation rests exclusively upon observance of a *custom*—“the wise custom which limits the President to two terms.” But there is no such custom, not even an example or a pronouncement to that effect from any authoritative source. The usage to which he refers is, of course, that of refusing more than two *consecutive* terms. Again the writer could not have employed the qualifying adjective without implying a willing candidacy at some future time, and, in his embarrassment, he was forced to use words which, as penned, constituted a false premise.

We have already seen that real meaning is quite as dependent upon context as upon the actual words employed in assertion. Indeed, in the two instances noted, analysis of the flat contradiction has clearly left the former in the paramount position. We now proceed a step further and note the equally influential component part of the causes of an important assertion to be found in circumstances, environment, temperament and record, the impelling force of each of which is recognized to a degree in any exegetical process. Of the effect of the enveloping conditions at the time the statement was put forth, it suffices to say that all tended to incite a generous mind and grateful heart to a self-abnegatory act. Others deserved consideration—others who had rendered great personal services, which could be requited only by clearing the way for the gratification of their own ambitions.

The opportunity, moreover, to overwhelm with confusion those whose taunts of attempted usurpation had been borne in contemptuous silence during the campaign, was exceptional in that the time of making the avowal could not fail to emphasize the patriotic unselfishness of the act. Enhance the effect of these natural and creditable emotions with the overpowering influence of a temperament impulsive and eager ever not only to do the right but to do it instantaneously, and the irresistibility of the suggestion becomes manifest. To insist that action thus taken should, in contemplation, be wholly deprived of that elasticity of interpretation which has been accorded bearers of great responsibilities since the world began is not only illogical but ignoble.

That acceptance of the nomination two years hence will give rise to some displeasure I consider to be an inevitable contingency of great achievement. But only minds unwilling, or incapable, of true understanding will harbor such a sentiment. No personal act teeming with possibilities of general benefit merits resentment unless itself be tainted by deceit—and he would be a temerous person, indeed, who should venture to suggest the existence of that detestable attribute in the character of Theodore Roosevelt. If ever a life was an open book, it is his. His faults, of which he has his due proportion, no less than his virtues, with which he is endowed beyond measure, he has emblazoned with unsparing hand upon the pages of history. Whether he be considered in the right or in the wrong, he has never concealed his implicit faith in the human's possession of the right of changeability. Scores of instances in his political life might be adduced to indicate his determination never to permit a possible accusation of self-stultification to stand in the way of performance of his full duty, as *at the moment* he should perceive it. One in precise parallel with the case now under consideration is a complete estoppel of any hypercritical complaint of lack of foreknowledge. While Governor of the State of New York and harassed by the unremitting efforts of politicians to submerge him in the Vice-Presidential office, he declared with all the emphasis at his command: "Under no circumstances could I or would I accept the nomination for the Vice-Presidency." Later, he added, "My position in regard to the Vice-Presidency is absolutely unalterable." Even the qualifying "or be a candidate for" is note-

worthy by its absence. And yet, when the time came and his duty to his country and his party was writ in letters so bright that they could not but illumine his conscience, he reluctantly made what then seemed to be a mighty sacrifice; and, instead of indicating resentment, the wise, broad, tolerant American people subsequently set upon his act the seal of almost unanimous approbation.

From all points of rightful consideration, therefore—from analysis of written words proving the paramountcy of contiguous expression, from the special privileges accorded to those in high places, from the effect of environment upon a generous and grateful mind, from the inevitable issue of a truly American temperament, from a known record of disregard of minor morals in achievement of transcendental importance to the common weal, from stern, sturdy devotion to public duty irrespective of effect upon personal reputation—I am satisfied that I have established, in logic and in morals, the absolute and unqualified right of Theodore Roosevelt to accept the Republican nomination for President in 1908, and, simultaneously therewith, the full qualification of myself and every other citizen of like mind to vote for him with a clear conscience and perfect assurance that there is no blot upon his gleaming escutcheon.

Q.